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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000234

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SW](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: SWEDEN ON RELATIONS WITH HAMAS

REF: STATE 27174

Classified By: Polcouns Casey Christensen, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (c) MFA Director for the Near East and North Africa Peter Tejler told us 2/22 that while Sweden hewed to the common line of the Quartet and the EU on the message to and contacts with Hamas, there was need for a strategy that went beyond "high-pitched" public diplomacy. Sweden's Palestinian assistance is channeled through the PLO, not the PA, thereby avoiding the issue of future Hamas dominance of the PA. Tejler said the GoS is concerned about funding for the Palestinians and would like to know U.S. views on Israel's withholding of tax payment transfers. End Summary.

Holding the Line on Contacts with Hamas

2. (c) Polcouns made 2/22 reftel demarche on meeting with Hamas to MFA Director for the Near East and North Africa Peter Tejler. Tejler said that Sweden, the EU, and the Quartet were all laying down the same conditions. Tejler said Sweden's policy was to have no official contacts with Hamas. No political-level meetings were foreseen, nor, he added, would there be meetings with Hamas at his level. The GoS had no plans for official visits to Israel and the Palestinian areas until after the Israeli elections.

3. (c) The GoS did not speak directly with Hamas. While this policy was not under review, it was clear, Tejler said, that we need to understand better the factions in Hamas. Hamas was both a terrorist organization and a political party. He added that as it assumes power, we will need to assess how it is developing, and the positions it takes. Tejler said that when he was in Israel in December 2005, he had spoken with Israeli analysts who had recognized there were a number of strains within Hamas, and it was not yet clear how they would sort out as it assumed power. Tejler said the Israelis themselves had contacts with Hamas.

Getting the Message Across

4. (c) Tejler said that in the context of the official and high-pitched rhetoric that is currently being used on all sides, Hamas would not be able change what it is saying. He did not foresee a repeal of the 1988 Hamas platform. At the same time, he said, we should keep in mind other instances of transitions from terrorist to political organizations, including the beginnings of the PLO and groups involved in the founding of Israel. In order to provide opportunities for that kind of transition, Tejler said there needed to be more than just public diplomacy. Interlocutors to whom more could be communicated than a few bullet points would be needed. Tejler said there was a discussion within the EU on the conditions for dealing with Hamas and how to go about getting an answer from them. It should not be expected,

Tejler said, that the answer would be a public one.

¶5. (c) One of the factors to be taken into account in connection with a Hamas-led government, Tejler said, is what kind of mandate Hamas received in the election. It did not receive a mandate to "throw Israel into the sea."

¶6. (c) Tejler said Sweden had seen no evidence of terrorist incidents sponsored by Hamas since the Palestinian elections, and little during the autumn period running up to the elections. In terms of terrorist violence, the current problem might be, he added, more with the al-Aqsa Brigade and Islamic Jihad. These other sources of violence could, in turn, present a problem for Hamas in its governmental role.

Sweden's Assistance Channeled Through the PLO

¶7. (c) Tejler confirmed press reports that Sweden was increasing Palestinian assistance. The five-million Euros of Palestinian assistance recently reported was a "technical roll-over" of an existing program. Tejler underscored that Sweden provides no assistance to the Palestinian Authority. All of Sweden's assistance goes to the PLO; even its assistance to civil society is provided within this framework. Tejler said President Abbas had recently stressed his role as head of the PLO. For its part, Hamas is on the Terrorist list, its assets are frozen, and Sweden makes no contributions to it. At the same time, Tejler noted that Sweden had been providing, even before the recent elections, assistance to two communities that have Hamas-led governments.

A Message to Israel

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¶8. (c) Sweden also believed that the international community's requirements of the Israeli government should be made very clear. As an occupying power, Israel had a responsibility to provide support to the Palestinians. Israel's failure to make tax transfer payments to the Palestinians went against the terms of the Oslo Agreement. Tejler said Sweden would like to know the U.S. views on Israel's withholding of the tax payment transfers. Sweden was concerned that it "would need to cough up more funds for the Palestinians if the Israelis do not." In addition, Sweden was concerned that Israel could also not allow transfer of equipment by third parties, including equipment destined for the EU police-training program for the Palestinians.

Comment -- and Action Request

¶9. (c) Tejler was keen to note that we are on the same sheet of music. At the same time, Sweden has a major commitment to the Palestinians, and tends to take a hard line with Israel. In the past, Foreign Minister Freivalds has frequently chided Israel publicly, including over the issue of withholding transfers of funds to the Palestinians. Tejler has noted that she has so far refrained from doing this again -- but Sweden is concerned about how the Palestinians will be funded, and are keen to have our views on the withholding of tax transfer payments.

Drafted by POL:CChristensen
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